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Towards the close of 1868 politics passed before literature in Madame Meurice's *salon*, for the tide of opposition to the Empire was then rising rapidly. In May, that year, Henri Eochefort, thanks to a new press law and the help of Villernessant, had started his famous periodical, "La Lanterne"; and in all directions the liberal newspapers had become more and more outspoken, in spite of the many sentences to fine and imprisonment which were heaped on their managers, writers, and printers. The grant of the right of public meeting added to the general unrest, and when 1869 arrived the excitement of the Parisians became the greater as general elections were appointed to take place in May. "La Lanterne" having been crushed — Eochefort seeking an asylum in Belgium where Hugo gave him hospitality — many suggestions of starting another opposition journal were made in Madame Meurice's *salon*. A certain Barbieux, a victim of the *Coup d'Etat*, carried the idea to Hugo at Brussels, and no satisfactory title having been as yet suggested, the poet undertook to provide one. The next morning, says Eochefort in his autobiography,¹ he proposed "Le Eappel" — a speaking title for those times, signifying a call to arms, the

mustering of all who wished to shake off the
rule of
Napoleon III.

From the first gossip at Madame Meurice's it
had been
arranged that Zola should belong to the staff
of the proposed
journal, the principal contributors to
which were
Charles and Francois Hugo, the great man's
sons; Louis
Blanc the historian ; Auguste Vacquerie,
perhaps the ablest

¹ "The Adventures of my Life," by Henri Rochefort,
English edition,
London, 1896, Vol. I, p. 206.